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GUEST: **Amb. Hisashi OWADA**
Chairman, Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly for the Mid-Term Review of the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s

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UNITED NATIONS NEW AGENDA FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA

Ambassador Hisashi OWADA, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the New Agenda for the Development of Africa, discusses economic, political and social issues vital for the development of the African continent. The African countries recognize their responsibility for the achievement of economic and social development; the international community should support Africa's development efforts on the basis of partnership and responsibility. The New Agenda highlights the special situation and particular needs of the African continent. Many African countries have implemented political and economic as well as structural and institutional reforms needed for the implementation of the New Agenda, which calls for urgent action to support Africa's efforts to integrate fully into the global economy.

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ANNOUNCER: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **World Chronicle**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is **World Chronicle**.

There is general agreement that the 1980s were a decade of economic and social stagnation for the African continent. Many African countries have embarked on economic and political reforms, but with little progress. In 1991, to assist African nations to overcome their difficulties, the world community adopted the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. What's been accomplished since then? Are the peoples of Africa better off today than they were a decade ago?

Our guest today, Ambassador Hisashi Owada of Japan, is Chairman of the UN committee which recently reviewed the implementation of this New Agenda for Africa at its midpoint. Joining me to talk with Ambassador Owada are Ted Morello of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and Segun Adeyemi of the News Agency of Nigeria.

Ambassador Owada, welcome to World Chronicle.

OWADA: Thank you.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Ambassador, perhaps I may repeat the questions which were asked in the introduction: What's been accomplished since the introduction of this New Agenda, and are the peoples of Africa better off today than they were at the start?

OWADA: Mr. Littlejohns, the answer to your question is a mixed one. Quite clearly, the progress has been there, but the degree of progress which has been achieved is much too little to be satisfactory. And that is why we decided to engage in the new exercise called UN-NADAF, New Agenda for the Development of Africa, in 1991. The first half of that decade, or six years since then, the growth was very little; the average growth rate was 0.6% during the period 1990 to 1994, which of course is much too little. On the other hand, also it is a fact that 33 out of 48 countries—this is in the world—33 are in Africa.

LITTLEJOHNS: The least developed countries.

OWADA: The least developed countries, yes. On the other hand, more recently I think the GDP growth for 1995, for instance, has reached 2.2%, which is much better than the previous period, and about a dozen countries have reached a growth rate of over 6%. So that's not bad news. In fact, it is—the answer to your question in short is that the progress has been made, but the degree of progress is much too unsatisfactory.

LITTLEJOHNS: Percentagewise, what is the target for Africa?

OWADA: Well, the target as described in UN-NADAF in 1991 was 6% growth.

LITTLEJOHNS: That's very high.

OWADA: That's very high.

LITTLEJOHNS: But, I mean, is that attainable, do you think? Is that realistic?

OWADA: Whether this is realistic or not is something that we have to think about, but what is really important is to try to think about concrete ways of approaching that target. It's no good simply to hoist a target and pray to God. What is really important is to get down to the implementation and to get to concrete measures.

MORELLO: Mr. Ambassador, what are some of the elements that are blocking progress? You say there is progress and lack of progress. Does it come from the donor side primarily, or from the recipient side, or both?

OWADA: Well, I don't like to answer that question in that way. I think what is really needed is a spirit of partnership and shared responsibilities. The basic problem, as I see it, is that for many years during the cold war period the programme of development was styled as a North-South issue in the context of East-West confrontation. And the North-South issue became the hostage of that confrontational structure. The genuine problem of development was not really addressed. What is really important is to think about the genuine problem of development, which should be based on partnership and cooperation rather than confrontation and division. And so I don't like to speak about the problems on the donor side or the problems on the recipient side.

MORELLO: But changes have been called for by the donors in their policies. The usual thing that we have heard for many years, of course, is more money, transfer of technology, things of that sort. These are old initiatives, so to speak. Is there anything new along that line that's been proposed?

OWADA: Well, there are two new things in the present exercise that has just been completed. One is the substantive side, that we agreed that what is really needed is a comprehensive approach which would include not only the question of the ODA [overseas development assistance], which naturally is very important, but also the resource flows through direct investment; the question of trade, including the question of market access; the transfer of technology; social infrastructure, and also the soft side of the social infrastructure, namely, the human beings who really deal with the social infrastructure. Now, all these things will have to be looked at in combination in a comprehensive way. That is a very important message that we are sending out now.

The second important aspect, which is equally important to me, is the political side of the exercise, that is to say the political symbolism involved in the exercise, which is that for the first time, I think, we have come to a joint exercise or common exercise. It isn't a reciprocal structure of give and take. It is not even a mutual exercise in the sense of doing things towards others. It is merely a common exercise in which countries on the recipient

side and countries on the donor side should get together to deal with the problem as a common problem.

ADEYEMI: Mr. Ambassador, in a report due on the UN New Agenda for African Development by the Secretary-General, he said that tangible results had been achieved, but that the results fell far short of what was envisioned in 1991. And I wonder, what came out of your recent review that will help the implementation of this new UN Agenda for African Development in the second half of its existence?

OWADA: Well, you have to accept the reality of the situation, that it is not so much the lack of will on the part of the countries which have been offering the resource flows to countries in Africa, it is the financial budgetary situation prevailing in those countries. And that is one factor. Another factor, of course, is that after the demise of the cold war, with the disruption of the international order, there are so many countries which require assistance from the donor community. So all this we have to accept as a matter of fact. What is really important is intensified efforts, and the question is how to mobilise that political will to intensify our efforts. And that is why I said political symbolism is very important.

ADEYEMI: And another major problem has been the debt crisis in Africa. Africa is spending about 30% of its export earnings on debt servicing. And since this is based on shared responsibility and partnership, how could Africa be expected to carry out better governance, improve its healthcare system, educational system, if it's spending these kinds of amounts? Uganda alone spends about 27% to service its debt. And that is really high. So I'm wondering how this issue of the debt crisis can be addressed to help in the implementation of this programme.

OWADA: The question of debt crisis and debt relief was discussed extensively. And I agree with you that this is one of the most urgent problems that we have to deal with. Having said that, you really cannot deal with this problem in a mechanical, automatic way. What is really important is the individualized approach, to deal with various issues depending upon the condition of the countries involved. For instance, debt issue may not be as important to some countries as to others. And what is really needed is to think about various ingenious ways of how to cope with that problem. I certainly agree that for many countries in the least developing world the debt service ratio is really hampering growth. So we thought about this problem, and of course there are many attempts going on already, in

the context of the G-7, for instance, the Paris Club and the Naples formula*, and so on and so forth.

LITTLEJOHNS: The most – the richest, most developed countries.

OWADA: That's right. On the other hand, of course, we have to think about this problem in the whole context of various ingredients that I talked about.

LITTLEJOHNS: Ambassador Owada, we hear a good deal these days about donor fatigue, meaning that the rich countries, the Group of 7 countries, for example, are getting a little tired of pouring money into the developing world and not seeing enough development result from their contributions. Is this a problem that you addressed in your review? And what can be done to maintain and increase the volume of international aid?

OWADA: I believe myself that this problem of donor fatigue is simply exaggerated. I think there still is a sufficient amount of goodwill and sincerity on the part of many countries to try to work out the solutions to the problems that many countries in the developing world are suffering. What is really important is to demonstrate that the money spent, the efforts exerted for solving this problem are going to be utilized for good purposes. In other words, what is really important is to identify the good cause for which we are working. And I think we did spend a lot of time in discussing this problem. And one of the solutions to the problem is to try to create some concrete targets to achieve in terms of output-oriented approach rather than input-oriented approach. In other words, instead of saying how much money I have spent which may be wasted, rather to think about what kind of results are going to be achieved with that money. And, in other words, I think it's very important to think about the outputs or the result of the money spent in terms of things like the achievable growth rate, the deduction in the infant mortality rate, the degree of increase in the literacy rate. And all these things are targets which are tangible, visible. And if you have that, that will give hope to the countries which are striving to achieve that target. And also it gives encouragement and confidence to those people who are trying to cooperate. So that's one of the ways to deal with that problem.

MORELLO: The question of conditionality, which you know is a red flag and has been a red flag to not only Africa but to developing countries generally, what consideration did you give to that at your G-7 talks?

OWADA: Well, as you know, I mean, speaking as a representative of Japan, Japan did a great deal to create a new strategy, a new formula for a strategy in the context of the OECD DAC [Development Assistance Committee] this May, and then that was implemented

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* The Naples terms, adopted in 1994 by the Paris Club for the long-term rescheduling of debt payments.

in the G-7 summit declaration in Lyons. And the essence of it, of course, is that we have to get down to what I tried to describe earlier, namely the combination of a comprehensive approach and the individualized approach. The essence of it is that you have to take into account various ingredients which should be implemented as a whole; a holistic approach is very needed. And in that framework it is important to think about the concrete economic and social conditions of the country involved. And what is really important is the principle of ownership. In other words, the country concerned should think about the problem as their problem and to work together with the countries which are cooperating with them in order to work out a concrete strategy to suit the conditions of that particular country. In other words, the best policy mix should be worked out in combination among all the participants. And the question of conditionality comes precisely in that context in the sense that simply imposing conditionality from the donor community or donor institution will create many problems, because, first of all, this is something which has not emerged in the process of consultations with the recipient country, and, secondly, it very often can ignore the concrete conditions which prevail in the countries concerned. So what is really important is to think about the problem as a common problem and to think about an individualized approach to create the best policy mix while incorporating some of the important elements which are contained in that programme of conditionality.

LITTLEJOHNS: This is **World Chronicle**. Our guest is Hisashi Owada, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the New Agenda for the Development of Africa.

MORELLO: Mr. Ambassador, when you think of a holistic approach to these things, are you speaking on a continental-wide basis? And how do you take a holistic approach to a unit that has—well, the continental unit, that has, what, something over 50 countries in it, all with their own cultures, their own approaches, their own political—how do you manage that holistically?

OWADA: I didn't mean to talk about that problem by using the holistic approach. What I meant to say was, as I said earlier, a comprehensive approach to cover all these ingredients. Naturally, in dealing with this, as I said, an individualized approach is needed. And what is really needed is not to think about one abstract strategy to apply to the whole continent of Africa; what is really needed is a country-by-country approach, and perhaps some regional or sub-regional cooperation would be extremely important. When I say holistic, I mean that word to signify the comprehensiveness of the ingredients to be included into this process.

ADEYEMI: Mr. Ambassador, while the international community might be able to help Africa to develop, Africa bears the ultimate responsibility for its own development.

What are the areas in which the countries of Africa could do better to help the implementation of the UN New Agenda for African Development?

OWADA: Well, as I said, I do not really like to think about the division of labour. On the one hand you have commitments and responsibilities of African countries, and on the other hand you have the responsibilities and commitments of the international community excluding Africa. I think the international community is a concept inclusive of Africa. In other words, what is really needed is to think about this programme as a programme of the international community as a whole, inclusive of Africa. Nevertheless, having said that, of course there are certain things which the recipient countries would have to do more emphatically, and there are things which outsiders would have to do to cooperate. In that context, of course, some of the items which were discussed in the UN-NADAF context on the African side were the question of economic reform, first; second, promotion of the private sector and foreign direct investment, in other words, preparing the environment; third, intensification of the democratization process and the strengthening of civil society; fourth, environment and development; fifth, agriculture, rural development and food security; sixth, the human dimension; seventh, regional and sub-regional cooperation and integration; and finally, but not less important, South-South cooperation. Those are the things where the recipient countries would be in a better position to take the initiative. On the other hand, for the donor community aspect, I think there are certain things which were stressed, and let me give you some of the examples. The issues discussed were: resource flows from the donor communities to the recipient side; the debt problem; trade facilitation and market access; diversification of African economies and cooperation from the donor countries; development assistance for capacity-building; and non-African non-governmental organizations. Now, those are the kinds of things with which perhaps the outsiders can do more in order to cooperate with the African countries.

ADEYEMI: So what importance has been given to the issue of peace? Because if you don't have a conducive environment where there could be investment and countries could develop, whatever efforts are being made will probably not come into fruition. And with the several conflicts dotted all across the African continent, I think this should have been given a high priority in the implementation of the programme:

OWADA: I think you're absolutely right. But that is a basic premise of the whole exercise. This is not that this is not important; this is so important and so obvious that I did not include it in that, because what I listed are the economic factors that are directly relevant to the question of development. But covering the whole, there is a question of peace and stability, which of course is a *sine qua non* for the question of development. I very much agree with you, yes.

MORELLO: I believe the Secretary-General on that point has said, though, that peace depends on development and development depends on peace, so that you have a circular kind of thing. How do you break that circle, or where would you attack that?

OWADA: Well, that's why I did not want to talk about this in those terms, because once you get into the circular argument you really cannot break that circle. I think that peace is a prerequisite for development, and development can be sustained on the basis of a durable peace, yes, but I think that those are two issues that you have to deal with separately while keeping in mind that these are inter-linked. In other words, what I mean to say is that we have to work on two fronts. On the one hand we have to think about the question of regional stability and peace on the continent, and that is one exercise that we have to engage in, but at the same time the development issue in the UN-NADAF context, we have to concentrate on some of the concrete issues that we should address.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Ambassador, I'm sure we all recall the predictions that were made for the new South Africa as it's now called, post-apartheid South Africa, how it was supposed to become the powerhouse for all of Africa. That doesn't seem to have happened. What's gone wrong with South Africa?

OWADA: I don't think anything has gone wrong. I think it takes time. One cannot be too impatient about this. I think that southern Africa in general is a very promising sub-region of Africa with South Africa as its engine of growth. The same would be true for East Africa; the same could be true for West Africa. I think when thinking about the problem of the development of Africa, one has to think about the problem of development of Africa as a whole, but at the same time to do it, to try to do it through sub-regional cooperation. If you look at the situation in Southeast Asia, for instance, Asia of course is one unit, but you really cannot talk about the development of Asia as a whole. And each sub-region is doing its own efforts and is doing its own best. And if you take Southeast Asia, I think Southeast Asia has been showing a remarkable progress, which sometimes is described as a miracle, but it isn't a miracle, it is an inevitable result of the combined efforts of the various countries involved, which includes Japan. And you have this Southeast Asian region which in the 1970s was very much at about the same stage of development as many African countries are now—it's only a difference of 20 to 30 years—and what happened was that what is very often described as a flying geese pattern of development took place. Namely, there are countries which really lead the way, like Japan. Then that has a beneficial effect to countries in the region which can follow, like the Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore. And then it will have the accelerating effect to the countries in the same sub-region, to Indonesia, to Malaysia, to the Philippines, and so on and so forth.

LITTLEJOHNS: So is there not enough sub-regionalization, if one may use that term, for Africa at the moment?

OWADA: I don't mean to say that there is not enough sub-regionalization, but I think the future would be much more promising if we tried to encourage the degree of regional and sub-regional cooperation, with some country in the centre leading the way.

ADEYEMI: Earlier in the year, Mr. Ambassador, the Secretary-General launched the UN Special Initiative for Africa, and it's been said that this is not an alternative to the UN New Agenda for African Development. How does this help in the implementation of this programme?

OWADA: Well, this was very much discussed in the context of the UN-NADAF exercise this time, and we did make a reference to that programme in our document, and the new initiative by the United Nations Secretary-General was welcomed as complementary to the process. And I think that is right, because the UN Special Initiative is an accumulation of various efforts in different branches of the United Nations and the UN family, which in itself is very beneficial, but they would have to be looked at in the context of the framework that we established in the UN-NADAF as the strategy. And the Special Initiative of the United Nations is part of the concrete implementation of that strategy.

ADEYEMI: Apart from your role, sir, as chairman of this Ad Hoc Committee, Japan has done a lot to help African development, recently hosting this high level seminar on African development. In what other areas has Japan—you know, what other things have been done by Japan to help in implementation of the UN New Agenda for African Development?

OWADA: You know, Japan started to think about this problem of African development as the central issue for the world in the post-cold war era. Because, as I said earlier, the demands of the cold war meant a new opportunity as well as a new challenge to the world. And we thought that the time had come to think about this problem of development as a genuine problem of development, not as a problem of North-South in the context of East-West confrontation. And so we did propose a new approach to the G-7 summit in 1993 at the time of the Tokyo summit. Unfortunately there was a very lukewarm reception on the part of many partners in the G-7; perhaps it was a bit too early. But we decided to go ahead by ourselves, and we organized a Tokyo International Conference on African Development, which came to be known as TICAD, in October 1993. Since then we have been trying to work out two things: one is to think about a new strategy to suit the environment, the international environment of the new era; and second, to think about concrete means to implement that strategy. And on that basis we have been working for the last three or four years. And I think we have come to the stage where we can really think

about a common strategy, which was endorsed already by the donor community countries in the OECD Development Assistance Committee by the adoption of that judgement in the ministerial of the OECD in May; and that has been endorsed by the Lyons Summit of the G-7, which of course is quite a change as compared with 1993. As far as Japan is concerned, we have been, of course, trying our best efforts, and naturally Japan's volume of ODA has reached already about $15 billion per year as of 1995, which is about twice as much as the amount that the United States spends on ODA. But that in itself–

LITTLEJOHNS: ODA is overseas development assistance.

OWADA: Excuse me, yes, overseas development assistance. But that in itself is not enough. We have to offer more to Africa. And I think that there has been a shift taking place in terms of the destiny or the direction in which all the official development assistance is going, from Asia to Africa.

LITTLEJOHNS: Ambassador Owada, that's all the time we have. Sorry to cut you off there. Thank you for being with us on this edition of World Chronicle.

Our guest has been Ambassador Hisashi Owada, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the New Agenda for the Development of Africa. He was interviewed by Ted Morello of the Far Eastern Economic Review and Segun Adeyemi of the News Agency of Nigeria. I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of World Chronicle.

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